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## **Rep. Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX) Statement at the Hearing on “Modernizing the Workforce Investment Act: Developing an Effective Job Training System for Workers and Employers”**

*WASHINGTON, D.C. – Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce for the hearing on “Modernizing the Workforce Investment Act: Developing an Effective Job Training System for Workers and Employers.”*

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Thank you, Chairwoman Foxx.

I also want to welcome and thank our distinguished panel of witnesses for joining us today.

Before we begin today's discussion on modernizing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), I would like to provide some context for today's hearing.

As ranking member of this subcommittee, I believe that it's vitally important for us not to lose sight of the hardships that millions of Americans workers and families are facing in this economy. While our nation's economy is recovering, millions of American workers, both blue-collar and white-collar workers, continue to struggle to find good, family-sustaining jobs.

It's important to note that racial and ethnic minorities have been disproportionately impacted by this economic recession, with unemployment rates as high as 25 percent in some parts of the country, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

To make matters worse, a recent report issued by the Census Bureau showed that greater numbers of Americans are living in poverty. What's more, of the 46.2 million people who lived in poverty in America in 2010, one in five were children. In fact, Latino children are now the largest group of children living in poverty, according to a study by the Pew Hispanic Center.

It is imperative that Congress work to reverse these stark trends by creating good, family sustaining jobs and by strengthening our public workforce training and adult education system, so that it can do more to serve the long-term unemployed and our most vulnerable populations.

I'm afraid that it's difficult for me to lead a substantive discussion on WIA without also addressing the issue of jobs and the unmet needs of today's 25 million unemployed and underemployed workers. Simply put, jobs must be our number one priority.

I strongly agree with President Obama on the need to expedite the passage of "the American Jobs Act," and I fully support Ranking Member Miller's request to have hearings on this issue on this committee as soon as possible.

Constituents in my congressional district want Congress to act, to make federal investments in infrastructure, schools, businesses, and job training programs.

While my colleagues on the other side of the aisle support the consolidation of WIA programs and may argue that any savings should be used to reduce deficit, I can only support consolidation efforts and "flexibility" in areas where it makes sense.

Instead, our focus must be on improving the quality and accessibility of employment and job training services, not on eliminating WIA programs and weakening our public workforce training and adult education system.

It is my hope that this committee can work in a bipartisan manner to move a jobs bill forward and work closely with Labor Secretary Hilda Solis to reauthorize WIA.

Thank you.

<http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov>